

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION  
NUMBER

Interview with  
H. G. Perry

April 8, 1968; May 11, 1969

Place of Interview: Stephenville, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Fred Gantt

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*9/29/70*

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Dr. Gantt: This is Fred Gantt talking today, April 8, 1968, with Mr. Grady Perry of Stephenville, Texas. Mr. Perry entered North Texas State University in 1910 and attended several sessions there. Afterwards served in World War I. Then later ran for the Texas House of Representatives and was elected in 1920 during the term of Governor Pat Neff. After serving in the legislature, Mr. Perry was involved in business ventures and in the 1940's ran again for another term in the Texas House of Representatives. He has a rather unique distinction of having been the father of his successor in the House of Representatives. His son Wilbur Wright Perry succeeded him. Mr. Perry also has the distinction of having been the brother-in-law of Governor Coke R. Stevenson. Mr. Perry, this is a rather interesting background. Would you indicate how you got interested in politics and public office in the first place?

Mr. Perry: Well, even before World War I, I was interested in politics. My aunt had run for county superintendent and became the only . . . the first woman county superintendent in the United States. And I was interested in her campaign, and during her successor's

administration, who was another woman, I was appointed to the Board of Examiners in Erath County. At that time each county had a Board of Examiners who would either examine the teacher applicants and grade their papers or send the papers to the state. If the Board examined them, I mean, graded them, they got a county certificate--a first . . . a second or third grade county certificate. They didn't issue a first grade county certificate; but if they wanted a first grade certificate, the papers had to be forwarded to the state. I think I served on the County Board of Examiners when I was eighteen years old, and had several distinguished gentlemen who took the examination under me, one an ex-congressman and one was an ex-postmaster at Stephenville, and one was an outstanding business man in Stephenville. But those fellows all were younger than I was even.

After World War I, I came to Fort Worth, and I was broke, and I worked for a few days on the express car going from Fort Worth to Denison. And by the misfortune of a very outstanding man in Central Texas and a friend of mine, W. J. Clay, whose three surviving daughters live in Dublin--each one of them outstanding in her field. The youngest one was head of the Journalism Department at a college in Arkansas until she retired. Mr. Clay was teaching in a country school after having been commissioner of insurance and banking in Texas under Governor Lanham from Weatherford, and in his older years he couldn't hold a job as superintendent of schools . . . city schools so he was teaching

in the country. And he had a heart attack at Christmas time 1919, and I came home and finished out his term in the country school.

Then I went to Spur, Texas, and became commanding officer of a troop of cavalry in the Texas National Guard and the same time . . . at the same time was working for my uncle in a hardware store, and some friends of mine wrote me that the field was wide open in Erath County for a World War I veteran to run for the legislature. And, of course, that was a political advantage, and I came home and investigated it, and I found that both men were running on their second term that I was to oppose, and it didn't look too good to me. And nobody volunteered to pay my expenses so I studied about it for a while. Incidentally, in my three terms in the legislature nobody has ever contributed a dime to my campaign expenses, and each time that I have run for the legislature I've been opposed by a man running on his second term, which is unusual in itself. But I came back and ran and lacked eighty votes beating both of these men running on their second term. One of them had been a flatorial representative, and one of them was a representative of Erath County. And from there I went to the legislature and then at the end of the second called session of the legislature I came to Junction and bought an interest in the newspaper at Junction. That's where I met Coke Stevenson and operated the Junction Eagle for about six years.

Gantt: Now this was 1920 that you were running for the legislature that first time.

Perry: That's right. And Hobby was governor at that time. Neff came in the same election as I did.

Gantt: Right. Since you brought up Governor Hobby, it might be interesting for you to give me whatever recollection you have of Governor Hobby as a governor. The people who were in the legislature at the time that Hobby and Neff were in office are not very many any more, and so it would be interesting if you could mention something about your recollections of Governor Hobby's administration, and then we'll talk about Governor Neff.

Perry: Well, Governor Hobby, as I remember him . . . of course, I had very little political experience myself and wasn't a very able judge of another man's qualifications. But he had not had the experience . . . he probably had the ability as a newspaper publisher, but he didn't have the experience to get along with people, and he didn't have the tact of going along with the legislature. And he had a lot of trouble with the legislature and the Senate--not because his policies were opposed, as so much as because of his lack of . . . ah . . . of . . . I'd say, knowledge of human nature to deal with the members of the legislature, both in the House and the Senate. And at that time, of course, the lady who later became Mrs. W. P. Hobby, was chief clerk of the House of Representatives. And I don't remember ever having seen Mrs. Hobby--his first wife--but after she died,

why, Mrs. Hobby . . . the Chief Clerk became Mrs. Hobby. Miss Oveta Culp . . . Oveta Culp . . . right. And there were a hundred and thirty-one members in the House at that time. That's something. I think that . . . I didn't notice in this script at all, and during that session, they . . . they passed the joint resolution for a constitutional amendment to create . . . ah . . . it would be nineteen more members on to make it a hundred and fifty members. I believe the Senate, at that time, had the same number it has now, thirty-one. But the biggest difference, as I see, in the House of the 37th Legislature, 1921, and the present legislature is the age of the members. I think that maybe I could count on, I know I could count on both hands and maybe on one hand, the number of young men who were in the House at that time. It was predominately composed of men passed sixty years old, and a young fellow didn't have a chance then to make a valedictory address to the House.

Gantt: So you were one of the youngest members.

Perry: I was one of . . . I believe there was two other members younger than I was.

Gantt: Do you recall some of the other members that were elected in . . . about that time that have gone on to serve in other places in government?

Perry: Well, Tom Pollard . . . Tom Pollard from . . . well, I forget. Some little place over in Van Zandt County. They called Tom the member from the free state of Van Zandt, and he . . . he later

became a very able lawyer and a very wealthy oil man in Tyler, and finally wound up going insane and died about two years ago. And Albert Sydney Johnson, I've mentioned him before, is in Dallas. He was a Major General in the National Guard in World War II. And, of course, Wright Patman is . . . he was a young man at that time. I think, though, he is . . . I believe he is older than I am, maybe two or three years. And he's been Congressman from the First District. He took Morris Sheppard's place when Morris Sheppard died . . . I mean when Morris Sheppard ran for the Senate. When he . . . he was Congressman from the district and he ran for the Senate and was elected, and Patman took his place. At that time Charley Thomas was Speaker of the House and he was a representative from Denton County.

Gantt: Did you . . . Do you have any recollections particularly of the campaign that you conducted in 1920, and how you got there in the House in the first place?

Perry: Well, actually I just got out and threshed the bushes. I had a Model T Ford (chuckle) and I made all the country roads and had a very good reception. I didn't have any money to spend much for newspaper advertisements and I had to work part of the time. I remember one advantage in my favor that may happen now, and may not, I don't know how much influence the Chamber of Commerce has on the feeling of the people but my . . . one of my opponents was an old man and the other was about my age. And the Chamber of Commerce in Stephenville ran a full page advertisement for

this young fellow and one of my old friends, Bill Graves, who's the father of a whole bunch of superintendents of schools, postmasters, and college professors, wrote me a letter and said you've got it won. "The Chamber of Commerce has come out for Max Taylor in a full page advertisement." said, "just come on back and capitalize on it." I was out at Spur at that time. So then, I came back and I talked to a lot of people and I found that he was correct in that the people resented the Chamber of Commerce. I don't know why they did but they did. And that was probably responsible for my preponderance of votes against two men running for their second term.

So, I lacked eighty-one votes getting the majority of . . . I believe this is the first . . . I'm not sure but I think it was the first election after the run-off primary. I'm not sure of that but I think . . . and with this eighty-one votes that I lacked having a majority . . . why, Mack was through, Mack Taylor and Mack later became assistant United States attorney, District Attorney of Fort Worth under Henry Zweifel at Commanche, I mean at Brownwood. I'll get it after while, Grand Jury. Henry Zweifel is eighty-seven years old now and he's president of the bank over there and he's active, he handles it, he does it and I talked to him about an hour a while back and he's still carrying on. There is one thing I thought about here. I don't know whether it ought to come in at this time or not but I voted an additional compensation for district judges and district



attornies. As I remember district judges were drawing thirty-five hundred dollars a year and our county judge was drawing a hundred dollars a month as ex-officio county superintendent and eighty dollars a month for being county judge. And the commissioner was drawing seventy dollars a month. And that was one mistake that I probably made that would have been a political drawback if I had made the second race. I didn't run for the second term. But I got a bill through to give our county, which included two or three other counties, on a bracket bill to pay our commissioners a hundred dollars a month and I think that would have probably defeated me in the next election (chuckle) because nobody thought at that time that a commissioner was worth a hundred dollars a month.

Gantt: That is one of the major pieces of legislation that you sponsored.

Perry: Yes, that's right. That was it.

Gantt: When you were campaigning in 1920, did you have to make speeches? Did they have big political rallies?

Perry: Yeah. Not political rallies so much as . . . we had I don't know how many at that time but we had had a hundred and one . . . I mean a hundred and six county schools in our county. And when my aunt was county superintendent she drove a buggy and visited everyone of those schools during her term. And they tried to set the dates of closing of those schools so that they could attract as many candidates as possible and usually had a box supper or a pie supper or something and, of course, they always

unload on the candidates by getting them in a spot where they have to pay a big price for a box or a pie and it's a shame the way they did it but they did it anyway. And I made all the gatherings that I could.

Gantt: Do you have any idea at this time about, roughly how much it cost you to conduct your campaign?

Perry: Yeah, I spent two hundred and sixty or seventy dollars. I believe it cost . . . I think it cost twenty-five dollars to get your name on the ticket then, but you're prorated just like any other county officer then, now it's a set amount regardless of how many candidates run but then each they assessed the representative office so many dollars and it was divided between--among the candidates and I think it was twenty-five dollars that I paid. In other words, the office was seventy-five dollars they assessed then.

Gantt: Well, now, this same year you've already spoken about the run-off being used for the first time and I believe Governor Neff was the first governor to be elected as a result of a run-off. Did the state-wide race for governor in any way effect any of the local races?

Perry: I would say it did. See, Joseph W. Bailey, who has been a United States Senator, one of the greatest orators I ever heard, had . . . was trying to make a comeback and he ran against Neff and it looked like that he was going to defeat Neff and Neff, of course, being inexperienced in politics but a very brilliant man,

hit on the idea of gaining the West Texas vote by promising those people that he was going to cut up all those big ranches, like Swensons and Matadors, not to give it to the poor people like they do down in Mexico but he's going to sell it to them. And he carried that country. I saw . . . I talked to Neff when he came through Spur and I talked to Joe Bailey when he came through Spur. And I had known Bailey actually personally, because he was a good friend of the county judge at Stephenville, Mr. Thomson and he had visited Thomson several times while he was Senator. But after the election and he had carried West Texas, Neff suddenly found that it wasn't constitutionally possible to do the things that he had won the election on, so he never did bring his bill up to the House.

Gantt: Well, now you've mentioned Mr. Bailey, before we go on with Governor Neff, do you have anything you want to say about Joseph W. Bailey as a Texas politician?

Perry: Well, of course, he was involved in a big oil scandal and I remember hearing him speak and answering his critics. Cone Johnson, over at Tyler was his strongest opponent and his main critic, and they asked Bailey why he borrowed five thousand dollars from Waters-Pearce Oil Company from Henry Clay Pearce who was President of the Waters-Pearce Oil Company. And Bailey said the reason he borrowed money from Mr. Pearce is because Mr. Pearce had the money and he had to have some money. He didn't make any bones about it at all. And he defeated Cone Johnson for the

Senate. He was a man that could talk to five thousand people and make them hear him. I don't know how he did it but they didn't have any microphone in those days and I've seen him talk . . . heard him talk to five thousand people and they could even hear him around the fringes of the tabernacle or the place that he was speaking.

Gantt: Well, he was a pretty colorful political figure, wasn't he?

Perry: Yeah, he was. He was a very capable man, a very capable orator, a man that helped everybody. He reminded me of Beauford Jester not that Beauford was an orator, because he wasn't, but Bailey had a way of campaigning and if he met you on the street he had a way of making you feel that he had come a block or two out of his way just to shake hands with you. He had the ability to make you feel that way. And, of course, that attracted people to him. And he lived at Gainesville, came out of a small town. But he was dominant . . . and he was a forerunner of a . . . well I'd say . . . Ferguson copied him because Bailey used that first. The people who were against him were anti-Bailey and the people that was for him was pro-Bailey and he would say, "Now this is Baileyism, and the things that they stand for is anti-Baileyism." In other words, it's kind of like we are now. Everybody that don't agree with us is a Communist, you see. And Jim Ferguson used that later. Although Ferguson was governor a long time before Bailey ran for governor, Bailey was in the Senate, and he's the one that originated that anti-Bailey and Bailey propaganda.

And Jim Ferguson used it. You know Fergusonism was a good word in Texas for many years.

Gantt: While you're on Ferguson, did you ever have a chance to meet him?

Perry: Oh, yes.

Gantt: What was your impression of Jim Ferguson?

Perry: Well, my impression of Jim was that he was an astute politician. He was a different kind of politician from Bailey. Jim was a man that attempted to array class against class to a certain extent-- the poor people against the rich people. Of course, he belonged to the rich class, but he used that in his politics, and I . . . just to give you an example, he came to Junction while I had the newspaper there and made a speech. I don't know whether he was running for governor or whether his wife . . . I believe that was when his wife was running for governor. And he was hitchhiking, and he told them that he just didn't have the money to buy an automobile and travel so his friends carried him from one town to another. And that was good political propaganda, and he was quite an orator. And he reminds me of the old time preachers-- the brush arbor preachers. He could really carry his audience with him. Now there wasn't any question about that.

Gantt: Did you ever get a chance to meet Mrs. Ferguson?

Perry: Oh, yes. I was at her eightieth birthday celebration. I didn't know her very well.

Gantt: What about her as a politician? Did he do all the politics and leave . . .

Perry: I think so. I never could see that . . . now she was a likable person and probably an able person, but I never could see that without his help she would have been much of a governor. And yet a lot of a good many of our present day reforms originated with the Ferguson administration. I'd say as many as originated in any other administration. I believe that statement would stand up.

Gantt: Do you think she . . . her administration was a pretty constructive one then.

Perry: I think it was very constructive. Yes.

Gantt: Well, what was your own position on the Fergusons? Did you ever support them in an election?

Perry: No, I never did, but I . . . that didn't keep me from thinking that Mrs. Ferguson had a very constructive administration. I was in the newspaper business at that time.

Gantt: Now getting back to the 1920 election a little bit. Let's talk about your impressions of Governor Neff's campaign as opposed to Mr. Bailey's.

Perry: Well, I mentioned a little of that as his campaign to . . . in West Texas as it affected people who were opposed to the big ranches in West Texas. Neff, of course, I think at that time . . . I think he had been president of either the Southern Baptist Convention or the Texas Baptist Convention. I think I'm right in the chronology of that. And he was pretty well known, not as a politician but as an outstanding church man. And he

was, I'd say, a brilliant orator; he was very good. And he was a man of remarkable memory, and he never forgot a face or a name. Of course, these fellows like Neff and Allan Shivers and all of them have a man going along with them that tries to find out as many people's names as they can so they can call them by their given name when they meet them. But Neff had the most remarkable memory I ever saw. Twenty years after I was out of the legislature, and I hadn't seen Neff in that time. And he had become President of Baylor. Norman Vincent Peale came down to Waco to make a speech to the Shrine Temple at a ceremonial in Waco, and Neff was master of ceremonies. And after the speaker was finished, inasmuch as he may have mentioned the legislature and things that should be done and shouldn't be done, I went up and told him that I had been a . . . went up to tell him that I had been a member of the legislature and understood what he was talking about, and Pat Neff was standing there beside him. He, of course, was introducing him to people, and he . . . and I was a very insignificant member of the legislature, but he knew my name, and he remembered it, and he introduced me to Peale as . . . with my given name, which I thought was remarkable inasmuch as there was a lot of members in that legislature and in the next one. He was governor after I was out of the legislature. But I have seen him on a number of occasions when he had . . . he demonstrated an unusual ability to remember. Of course, he was getting along in years then.

Gantt: Well, now, what is your recollection about Governor Neff's relation to the legislature? Did he get along with the legislators pretty well?

Perry: Yes. He was a good politician in handling. Now you couldn't depend on him. For instance, I'll give you one example. I was sitting back in the back of the House in a chair talking to him when we were adjourning the second . . . the first called session of the 37th, and I said to him, "Governor, are you going to call us back?" And he said, "Well, I'll have to study about it a while." Because I was coming to Junction, and I wanted to know whether I was going to have to come back or not because they had unfinished work that had to be . . . he had to call it some time. And he could have called that session that day for the next day and saved the state a lot of money, but he didn't give me any definite answer. And he didn't . . . I guess nobody else, and he . . . he waited three days and called that session for an immediate convocation. And I thought that was very foolish, but he had some reason probably for doing it. But as far as getting along with the legislature, I think he . . . I think he got along with the members individually as well as any governors I've had any experience with.

Gantt: I believe it's a matter of record that he instructed his staff that whenever a member of the legislature came in that they were to have access to his office at once.



Perry: Yes, that's right. I never have . . . I never failed to get in within . . . well, after the next man came out. Somebody might be in his office, but . . . but as soon as that man came out, why, the next man went in.

Gantt: Did you have very much personal contact with him while you were a freshman legislator?

Perry: No, I didn't sponsor any bills because, like I said in the beginning, (laughter) they didn't allow a young man to sponsor bills then. If you . . . if you hatched up a good idea some old man would take it away from you, and . . . and he'd introduce the bill. He might let you co-sign it with him or something like that. But . . . but the young man just didn't do things in the . . . in the 37th Legislature.

Gantt: Who was the Speaker at that time?

Perry: Charlie Thomas from Denton.

Gantt: Yes, you mentioned that. What was your impression of him as a Speaker?

Perry: I think he did a remarkable job not to have been a politician. As I understand it, he wasn't a politician; he was an insurance man, I think. And I think . . . as I recall, he handled the legislature very well . . . and . . . and got a lot of action out of 'em without too much turmoil. I . . . I think . . . I'd say that he was a very efficient Speaker. I don't even remember who the other member from Denton was. I think they had another member from Denton; maybe a combination of two or three other counties who he was.

Gantt: I believe in a conversation sometime ago you indicated that one of the other members at that particular time was Sam Johnson of Johnson City, the father of President Lyndon Johnson. Is that . . .

Perry: That's correct. I served with him and knew him very well. In fact, in order to keep down expenses about thirty of us rented a big tent, and hired a cook, moved out to Deep Eddy on the Colorado, and got by on less than a dollar a day for our meals, and we furnished our own cots. And Sam was one of the boys that did that. And when the second called session was over . . . no, when the first called session was over, I was coming to Junction and Sam wanted to ride home with me. I had a Model "T" Ford, and there wasn't any . . . there wasn't . . . not only wasn't any highways, there wasn't any fenced public roads from Austin to Johnson City. There's just trails through ranches. And he rode home with me. And he was living right on the bank of the . . . of the Pedernales River, which has got a good deal of notoriety as being the early home--I don't think it was the birthplace, but maybe the early home--of President Johnson. And I laid down on his front porch and slept about two hours--he got me a pillow--and Lyndon was there. I didn't remember his name as being Lyndon; I didn't remember his name until later years, but he was the only son he had at that time, I think. No, there's one older, isn't there? One older than that. But anyway, Lyndon was there because he was the young . . . he was about thirteen years

old. He was about six feet, two or three inches tall as I . . . I thought he was about sixteen or seventeen years old. But I slept about two hours and rested and went on to Junction.

Gantt: So that's the first time you met the President of the United States?

Perry: That was the first time I met him . . . yeah. (Chuckle) And I had occasion to meet him several times after that.

Gantt: Yes. What sort of legislator was Mr. Johnson, in your opinion?

Perry: I'd say he compared favorably with my ability. He had no outstanding ability, and didn't take a very active part. In fact, I never heard him make a speech. I served on one committee with him; I don't remember which it was, but I served on one committee. He's a very quiet sort of a fellow. And most of his legislative activities, I'd say, were . . . would be passive, because he didn't . . . he didn't get mixed up in fights and controversies.

Gantt: Well, now, were there any real fights in this session of the legislature? What were some of the principal problems that faced that 37th Legislature in 1920?

Perry: Well, I just made a note here about the raising of some of the district judges, and I meant to follow that a little. I don't know whether . . . I may be getting way ahead. That has been a gradual process over the years of increasing different salaries of all the state officials, but particularly a judge's. And they used the same tactics then that they used nearly fifty

years later when I was in the legislature to create a still higher salary for district judge than . . . it's been gradually improving. Of course, I think it should have. But the tactics were this: Since the later legislators were mostly young men, these sponsors of this higher pay for judges would scare those young boys to death. A good many of them were law students at the University, and at Baylor, and they'd tell them that if they didn't support this raise in salaries for the judges, that they wouldn't have much chance of winning a case if they came before any of these judges. When actually, my memory of the early raises was that the judges didn't take too active a part in that. Not like they did in later years. And this . . . I think this . . . Everett Greer was for a raise from thirty-five hundred to five thousand and it failed. But I remember in the thirty-seventh, I mean in the fifty-first legislature, they had a bill to raise the salary, I believe, from eight thousand to ten thousand, and the argument was the same as it had been in the thirty-seventh, I mean in the fifty-first legislature, they had a bill to raise the salary, I believe, from eight thousand to ten thousand, and the argument was the same as it had been in the thirty-seventh legislature that they were going to get so much better judges. And I remember a fellow by the name of Hinson from Mineola, Texas, was sponsoring this. And in the previous session they had had the same thing, and it had failed. No, they did increase eight thousand to ten thousand. Now they were going to increase

it from ten to twelve thousand five hundred and had the same arguments. So I asked this fellow from the back microphone if that was what his argument was that he was going to get so much better judges. And he said it was. And I said, "Well, that's what they told me two years ago." During this two years that had elapsed since we increased the pay, judiciary, there had been three men elected to the Supreme Court that had never served a day as judge. One of them had never even been a justice of the peace; one of them had been a district attorney; and the other one had been chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee, and never had any judicial experience at all. And I said, "I don't believe that argument holds good that you're getting better men, better qualified men." And, of course, we had . . . we'd had three men. Bob Calvert and Meade Griffin, and Bill Wilson had been elected. Bill Wilson had been a district attorney, and Meade Griffin had been a district attorney. I don't think Bob Calvert had ever held any office. And he didn't have much comeback for that question. He (chuckle) never did answer. But really they scared those young fellows to death by telling them if they didn't vote for that bill, well, they just wouldn't have a chance in the world with the new district judge.

Gantt: Mr. Perry was there any other legislation during the 1921 session that you thought was rather significant legislation?

Perry: Well, I'd . . . I'd think that two things just offhand that . . . because . . . the Blue Sky Act of the thirty-seventh was that, I

think, the first attempt to limit the exaggerated claims and false advertising for selling stock in corporations or . . . well, probably only in corporations, but you could organize a stock company or joint partnership up until that time and just go to selling an interest in it. And it didn't mean anything I don't think from a legal standpoint. It was just a fake, and they had a lot of it. And then the hot . . . I think this is the first effort to curb hot checks. Up until that time there had been no penalty on the writing of hot checks. You could write a check for any amount from a dollar up, and there's no difference in the legal technicalities involved in trying to get your money. You just didn't have any chance of getting your money. Now, I think those two things have . . . they have been added to; and, of course, check writing of certain amounts over fifty dollars is a felony. But up until that time it wasn't a violation of the law at all.

Gantt: Do you recall that Governor Neff sponsored any particular legislation that he worked hard for?

Perry: Well, I know he did, but I . . . I . . . I know he used it in his campaign that he was . . . he made a better highway department than we'd had. The highway department was only about four years old then. I think it was created in '16, and it was very loosely put together and had very little authority and very little money because they didn't have license fees for cars then that amounted to very much. I think about a dollar and a half was

the average car license. They didn't charge you for registering your car; they just charged you for the license plates.

(Chuckle) And they didn't have very much money. And I know Neff had a program for the highway department, and I know that he reorganized it. And it became a more efficient organization. That was before even the days when the Department of Public Safety had been created, and they had to hire--they called them "highway cops." And the Highway Commission actually had the law enforcement of the traffic up until that time. Now it might've been changed in Neff's administration, but I know he . . . he had a . . . he had a program for improving the Highway Commission.

Gantt: The record shows that the passage of the appropriation bill was quite a problem about that time, and Governor Neff had to call several special sessions during his term to get the appropriation bill passed.

Perry: Yes. That's right.

Gantt: Why was that, do you think?

Perry: Well, it had jumped up considerably. Of course, everybody was economy conscious at that time. Hadn't got to the point . . . in other words, as I differentiate between those times and the present times, then they asked the comptroller how much money we were going to have. And they attempted to base the appropriations on the amount of money that he said would probably be available, which is absolutely different from what we have now. They decided how much money they're going to spend now, and then they

decide where they're going to get the money by adding extra taxes, but the tax . . . a tax raise was a dirty word back in those days. And that was in Neff's administration. I think the record will show that the appropriations for running the government was about sixty-five million dollars in Hobby's administration, and I think it jumped up almost double that in Neff's. And it's been climbing, of course, ever since. And I think that--referring back to what I said about talking to him about calling this special session--the reason I knew he had to call it because they hadn't passed the appropriations bill. And I knew he'd have to call it.

Gantt: Was the Conference Committee in those days as important as it's been in recent days?

Perry: Well, I'd say it was. I think . . . I think they . . . I don't believe there was much antagonism between the House and the Senate. I don't believe the Senate was as, I'd say, dominating in the free conference committees as they are now. They . . . they seem to dominate that, and that's caused a lot of antagonism between the speaker, of course, and the lieutenant governor I don't remember that they had as much static then over . . . over free conference committees as they do now.

Gantt: Do you recall who was lieutenant governor at that time?

Perry: I believe Lynch Davidson was. I believe he was. I know he . . . yes, I know he was. He went in at the same time I did.

Gantt: Did you have any contact with him?



Perry: Yes. I know him very well, very well. When he ran for governor, I did a lot to help him, I think, as I did put in a lot of time. I don't know whether I helped him any or not. And he . . . he was a wealthy man. He was a big lumber man in Houston, and he bought a newspaper in Houston to print his campaign literature. And when the campaign was over, he . . . he called me on the phone and told me if I wanted that paper, he'd just give it to me. (Laughter) He was through with it. He got beat. But I didn't want it because I didn't know anything about running a paper in a . . . it was in a suburb of Houston. I didn't know anything about running it. But Lynch Davidson was very, very nice to me when he was lieutenant governor and in the years ahead. I got him to come to Stephenville one time to make a talk, and I think he was a very efficient lieutenant governor. He . . . he was a man that had a good deal of will power, and he crossed some of the senators. And, of course, that always makes them mad. I've often said that the Senate . . . Texas Senate can take a little man and make a big one out of him in his own estimation quicker than any other department of the government. (Chuckle) They become (chuckle) . . . they become very important personages in a short time. And they have those courtesies and . . . what do they call it in the national where they . . . somebody seats them according to their rank, you know . . .

Gantt: Seniority.

Perry: Huh?

Gantt: The Seniority Rule?

Perry: Well, it's . . . the idea, but that's not it. Around the . . . around the White House, they have a man who does nothing except . . .

Gantt: Oh, "protocol."

Perry: Protocol. And they establish a protocol over in the Senate that amuses a person that knew these Senators before they went down there. I've known a good many of them before they got in the Senate, and they become very much more important when they get in the Senate.

Gantt: I don't believe I've asked you this previously, but were you a supporter of Governor Neff in his race?

Perry: No . . . no, I supported Bailey. Of course, I was in the campaign and I didn't . . . (chuckle) . . .

Gantt: You didn't actively . . .

Perry: (Chuckle) I didn't actively take any stock in any race.

Gantt: Now, just looking back at it here more than forty years later, did you really get a kick out of being a member in the 1920's?

Perry: Yeah . . . yeah, I did. Of course, the compensation was five dollars a day for the first sixty days, and two dollars a day after that. And . . . in proportion to what it is now, I guess it was--until this salary deal came along--was about the same. But . . . but I was young and I was broke, and I'd come out of the . . . out of the war with an ambition to do something for myself. And like I said before, I didn't know the government

owed me anything, and I wanted to get in the newspaper business. And this Junction deal came up, and gave me an opportunity.

Gantt: So that was what decided you not to run for a second term?

Perry: Yes. That's the reason I didn't run because I moved out of my district. And I was out of the district actually when I served in the second called session, or the third call . . . whichever it was. But I still . . . I was unmarried and still maintained my home in Erath County.

Gantt: Well, now, when you moved to Junction, you've told me previously that one of the things that you did as a newspaper publisher in Junction was to serve on a reception committee for William Jennings Bryan when he came to Junction. Would you tell me something about that incident?

Perry: Yes. Of course, I had never been too much of an admirer of Bryan, although I had several of his speeches, and maybe some of his records. But a man named Lefler, who was president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Coke Stevenson and I . . . maybe just . . . I don't think we were appointed on a committee; I think we just assumed that, because Coke had known him. And he was in town and we got word that he was coming through in a Model T Ford from Kerrville on his way to California. His wife at that time was practically an invalid, and he had a driver. So the three of us went out and met him about . . . oh, about half way between Junction and Kerrville, I'd say about twenty-eight to thirty miles out. The roads were very bad; in fact, there wasn't

any roads--they were just trails. And his driver was having trouble when we met them. And he got in and rode with us on into town, and the driver and his wife came in the other car. And he impressed me as being a very democratic sort of a person. He . . . he . . . took over, actually, the conversation; nobody had any opportunity to even ask him a question because he reminded me of Humphrey--he talked all the time. When you asked him a question, he just kept going. But he . . . when he got out down at Junction, why somebody was there to take a picture. He insisted on us being in the picture with him. So he called us over there and we were in the picture with him. And we . . . we took him to the hotel and had lunch for him and sent him on to Sonora. And after he got to California he sent us three or four autographed copies of his books. Sent them to Lefler, and Lefler was going to divide them up but he died before he ever divided them, and I don't know what became of them. I never did get mine. But he was . . . he was a personality that was as dynamic as I ever saw in an individual.

Gantt: He didn't make a speech in Junction?

Perry: No . . . no, he only stayed for lunch and went on. His wife was sick and he was anxious to get on down the road.

Gantt: Well, now, we've brought up the name "Coke Stevenson." You, of course, married the sister of Mrs. Stevenson while you were in Junction, and this brought you and Coke Stevenson together quite a bit, I'm sure. Since Mr. Stevenson went on later to

become Governor of Texas, tell me this: did you have any idea when you first met him that he would ever get into the Governor's office?

Perry: No. He . . . he had been . . . he had been county attorney, and county judge at Junction, and I think that's the only public offices he had held. Although he impressed me as being a pretty deep thinker, he didn't impress me as being a prospective politician at all. Actually I had most of my contact with him because of the fact that he was president of a small corporation that owned the newspaper, and . . . and he was the man that I had written to about the newspaper 'cause I hadn't had any newspaper experience, and I couldn't get into a newspaper that was of any consequence because of lack of experience. So this one was practically on the rocks, and so they were glad to get somebody (chuckle) to take it off their hands. So Coke wrote me of what the situation was and said to come on out and he thought we could make a trade. And they were so anxious to . . . to saddle it off on somebody that they made a proposition to sell me the five thousand dollars worth of unsubscribed stock at twenty-five . . . for twenty-five hundred dollars. And that was about all the money I had (chuckle) and so I couldn't have bought much of a newspaper anyway. So then Coke and I became . . . he was president of the bank at that time, First National Bank, and was practicing law, and had a brother that was practicing law. And . . . I don't know. It was . . . I guess I'd been there a year

before I . . . Doris, my wife, was away at school, and it was a year after I moved to Junction before I met Mrs. Stevenson.

Gantt: Did you, while you were in the newspaper, get active in any of Mr. Stevenson's campaigns for public office?

Perry: I did while he was . . . when I had another newspaper. He didn't . . . he wasn't in public office, you see, while I was . . . while I was in the Junction newspaper business.

Gantt: That's right.

Perry: But later on I . . . I did. A friend of mine whose campaign I managed at Carrizo Springs was Johnson . . . was Coke's opponent for Speaker of the House.

Gantt: That's A. P. Johnson

Perry: A. P. Johnson. And I managed Mr. Johnson's campaign when he ran for representative. And of course, I didn't have much way of helping him in this race, but I . . . I was for Johnson in the . . . in the Speaker's race--not that I had anything against Coke. But I . . . I'd been associated with Johnson pretty closely, and I . . . But Coke beat him.

Gantt: This . . . this is a little unusual that you'd be for the brother-in-law's opponent.

Perry: Yes, it is. But I . . . I'd been associated with Johnson; he'd done me a lot of favors while I was in the newspaper business in Carrizo Springs.

Gantt: And he was your representative at that time.

Perry: He was my representative at that time, and I was for him.

That was about the time I had a run-in with . . . in a mild way, with a Vice President of the United States, John Garner. I was running the paper at Carrizo Springs while he was running for Congress and he sent me a lot of publicity stuff about as much as is in this folder I have here and told me to run it and I ran it. And sent him a bill for it. I think eighteen dollars. And he didn't like it very much. He came down in a week or two, came in and told me he didn't appreciate it very much, that the other people didn't charge him. And I said, "Well, the other people are better fixed financially than I was." He wasn't a very important character to me, I didn't know he was going to be Vice President sometime.

Gantt: He was Congressman from your district?

Perry: He was Congressman from that district, yes.

Gantt: Did you ever get to know Mr. Garner very well?

Perry: Oh, yes, yes. I got to know him better and I knew his son, Telly Garner, knew him very well.

Gantt: Well, what's your impression of Mr. Garner while we're talking about different personalities.

Perry: Well, I don't know, I guess I misjudged the man. I never did consider him an outstanding man, but he must have been or he wouldn't have gotten where he was. He . . . I had a friend that maybe put it better than I can put it. He said as a member of the House of Representatives and as Vice President, he was a good poker player, (Chuckle) and I don't subscribe to that but I

mean that's the opinion of a lot of people. He was a man that couldn't be dominated though. He showed that by not going along for Roosevelt's third term. He was a man of deep convictions, I think. And he had a political machine in Southwest Texas that didn't include George Parr's district, I don't believe, but it included the machines down at Laredo and at Eagle Pass, but he had a pretty strong political organization.

Gantt: Personally, how did he compare, for example, with William Jennings Bryan?

Perry: Well, there's no difference, no comparison in the appearance of the two men or the way they impressed people. Garner was a very small insignificant person. With his boots on you would take him to be about a two section rancher or something like that. It would be my opinion of the people's estimate of him. Bryan was a man that you could look at him fifty feet away and he would impress you as being an outstanding personality. He just beamed it; you couldn't keep from knowing that he was . . . if I hadn't known his name, I would have . . . on the first sight I would have said that he was some man who had a commanding personality because he showed in his every action--walking, talking, and . . .

Gantt: Joe Bailey was sort of like that.

Perry: Same way. Joe Bailey . . . Joe Bailey, I think, had a more dynamic personality than Bryan did. I'd say he did.

Gantt: How would, say for example, Governor Neff compare with these? He was of a different style.



Perry: Well, he was a different type although I think . . . I think you'd have to make contact with Neff to appreciate his personality. He doesn't . . . he doesn't beam it like Joe Bailey and William Jennings Bryan, but as soon as you talk to Neff and get into a conversation with him, why, I think you appreciate his ability. There's no question that he had ability and plenty of ability.

Gantt: You mentioned a minute ago about the political machines. And as a newspaper man in Southwest Texas, I assume that you probably were able to observe some of the machines in those days. What were really the strongest machines, that you would think, were in existence?

Perry: Well, of course, the strongest machine I guess that was ever in Southwest Texas aside from the Rio Grande Valley where A. Y. Baker as sheriff of Cameron County was in control before the . . . before . . . well, I'd say before maybe the days of Archie Parr. The Callahan machine in San Antonio was the most dominant political machine for many years in the Southwest, and they were just . . . they were just dying when I went to Carrizo Springs. They'd begin to . . . they couldn't control the politics in San Antonio. They were still trying to, but they couldn't control them, and it got away from them along about . . . that would be in the early 30's. And then of course in some wards they were still . . . still dominant and still strong. But they died out, and then, of course, the Parr regime in South Texas; and it overlapped with the Baker regime in the lower Rio Grande Valley. And

then the . . . the . . . a pretty strong political machine at . . . at Laredo, where the district judge was Judge O'Malley. He was an Irishman, of course, a Catholic, and got all the Mexican votes along the border. And he was district judge there for a good many years and a very good one, I'd say that. And then the new political . . . I can't think of his name. He's . . . he's the father-in-law of the Congressman from that district now, and I served with the Congressman in the legislature, but their names get away from me. That's the reason I need to talk from notes because I just can't call those names up.

Gantt: We can add that when we edit it.

Perry: This boy was a Congressman from Laredo district. He's the son-in-law of . . . I think his name might be Hammond, but that doesn't seem like that's quite it. But anyway he dominates the politics down there, yet. And he put Judge O'Malley in office.

Gantt: Well, what's your general impression of these political machines around the Southwest part of the state. Were they helpful or were they just usually to get personal gain for somebody or . . .

Perry: I don't think that all political machines are bad. Of course, the question is where to draw the line. Now, a machine like George Parr's regime is bad. But a machine like they had in Laredo is not so bad. I don't think there was ever any scandal about stealing the county out and the county being bankrupt because of malfeasance in office. I don't recall it in the

Laredo district. Our county was in the Laredo judicial district, and on the whole, I'd say that they gave the county and the district a rather efficient . . . it's kind of like a boy told me from Nicaragua, he said, "In my country, you have to have a dictator because if you don't have a dictator who can control the country, people would be killing themselves all the time." And that would be more or less in the 30's when I was in that area down there. It was pretty wild and rugged. And if you hadn't had somebody that could control . . . you can see the results of it now, where it's uncontrolled, in the cities. You had to have somebody to control the situation or it would have been bad. A bunch of innocent people would probably have been persecuted or killed. But on a whole, they provided a pretty good system of government. And I don't think it was bad. In fact, I doubt if it could have been improved very much.

Gantt: You think the reason in Southwest Texas that there are so many of these political machines or combinations was because of the large percentage of Mexicans . . .

Perry: Oh yes. There's no question about that. They've got to have a leader.

Gantt: As a newspaper man in some smaller towns, what is the role of the newspapers in political campaigns? Are they very influential?

Perry: Well, I'd say they are. I think that if the management of a paper doesn't attempt to dominate the scene . . . I never did feel like it was my province to tell people how to vote or to

slant the news in the direction of the person I favored, although everybody has a tendency to do that. I think a country newspaper has more influence if it gives the facts and plays up the candidate that it favors in a favorable light rather than coming out and saying that everybody who takes this paper ought to vote for so-and-so, and I think, as I recall, I think in the counties where I owned newspapers, I think that the county went for the candidate that I happened to be for, but I don't know whether that's the result that I went with the majority or the majority went with me--I don't know which. (Chuckle)

Gantt: After having some newspapers then, you moved back to the Stephenville area and was in business there for a while and decided--was it 1946--to run for the legislature again?

Perry: Yes, 1946. Yes, I went back to Stephenville on account of the death of my father to help my mother get her finances in shape, and we just stayed there. And then in the early--that was in '31. In the early thirties then I went broke and I couldn't do anything else, and I started in a country store, stayed twelve years, then I came into Stephenville later in the hardware business in not an extensive but a pretty fair way.

Gantt: What decided you to run for the legislature in the 1940's?

Perry: Well, actually I'd say not very many times in my life people have insisted on me doing things, but since it was in the county that I had once represented and I had a pretty wide acquaintance in the county, actually, people began to come to me, early, and

asked me to run for the legislature, not discrediting my opponent, but he was running on a second term and had had some trouble down in Austin on hot checks and so on, and the ones who knew me thought maybe that I might do a better job, I guess. But anyway they came to me in pretty big numbers, and I agreed to run, and did run. And then I ran for a second term and won it. But that's when my son followed me. Of course, he--I'm not a politician--but he was even a worse politician than I was.

(Chuckle)

Gantt: At some time in a future interview, I think it would be interesting for us to talk not only about the legislature's problems in the late 40's but also to bring about a comparison of the methods of procedure and in some of the ways in which the legislature operated, contrasting the 1940's, the late 1940's, to the early 1920's, and . . .

Perry: I think that would be very good to discuss.

Gantt: You are one of the few people, I'm sure, that served in that wide a span of time. And so, when we get together again we'll talk about some of the changes that have taken place.

Perry: I'll try to do a little research. I think I'm one of the very few that served again. Now, \_\_\_\_\_ Johnson and a man over in Texarkana, you see, they never served again in the legislature. I think I'm one of the few men who served as far back as the 37th and that later served in the legislature. I know \_\_\_\_\_ Johnson never came back to the legislature.



Oral History Collection  
Governor Coke R. Stevenson  
Also Present: H. G. Perry

Interviewer: Dr. Fred Gantt

Place of Interview: Junction, Texas

Date: May 11, 1969

Dr. Gantt: This is Fred Gantt speaking from the ranch of the Honorable Coke R. Stevenson May 11, 1969. Also present is the Honorable H. G. Perry, former member of the Texas Legislature who is a citizen of Stephenville, Texas, and a former publisher of the paper, Junction Eagle. One of the notable events that took place when these gentlemen were in Junction was the visit of the Honorable William Jennings Bryan, who had been a candidate for the presidency of the United States. I asked Governor Stevenson and Mr. Perry to give some reminiscences about the visit of Mr. Bryan and their reactions to it. Mr. Perry, what were the circumstances that brought Mr. Bryan to Junction?

Mr. Perry: Well, the morning Emil Loeffler who was a hardware man and a very progressive citizen of Junction--I think Coke will agree with me on that, that Emil probably did more for the town than any other man that's ever lived in it--came down to the newspaper office and said he'd just gotten a telephone call from Kerrville that a car in which Bryan was riding--we didn't know whether it was his car or what--but the car in which he was riding was on the way to Junction, and the roads were so bad that they suggested

we go out and meet them and help them get into Junction. Riding over that road now, you can't hardly conceive of what it was then. So he had already contacted Judge or he contacted him later, I don't know which, and the three of us went out to what is known as Midway, I think that's about where we met, about the Midway Station where the old stagecoaches changed horses. And then he, Mr. Bryan, and his wife and a driver were in a Model T Ford. And he got out and rode with us. And I believe you were driving . . . were you driving the Ford?

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: You were driving and he rode in the front seat with you. And Emil and I rode in the back seat.

Gantt: At that time Mr. Stevenson was County Judge?

Stevenson: No.

Perry: No.

Stevenson: Just after I had been County Judge.

Gantt: After you had been County Judge?

Stevenson: Yes. I was president of the bank, First National Bank, at the time this took place.

Gantt: What is your recollection of Mr. Bryan, the first time he talked?

Stevenson: "Me."

Gantt: How'd you see him?

Stevenson: Well, I knew he was a very distinguished American. And I was quite prepared to meet a man that was . . . had all the



qualifications of being three times the nominee of the Democratic Party in the nation for the presidency. But I hadn't visualized just meeting him in person on a visit to California. He was on his way to California for his wife's health. Now his wife had arthritis.

Gantt: Yes.

Stevenson: You remember that?

Gantt: Oh, yes.

Stevenson: And her fingers were drawn to fixed positions like this, and she couldn't open them.

Perry: She told me she was ashamed to go in a hotel like that.

Stevenson: That's right. So we met him down there and then on the way up to Junction the conversation was very interesting. He was a most interesting man. Mr. Bryan had a wonderful voice. He could be heard for a long distance by large audiences. And even in a conversational tone he was quite a distinguished man in that respect. And, of course, he was well informed on all national questions.

So we had a very interesting trip coming up to Junction. When he arrived at the point east of town that affords a view of the junction of the two rivers, the North Llano and the South Llano, he looked it over and had us to stop there. And he got out and went off a little piece and looked up and down, and he said it was the most beautiful view he'd seen on the trip since he'd left his home coming in this direction. And, of course,

Mrs. Bryan remained in the car. That's the other car, you know

. . .

Perry: Yes.

Stevenson: Grady? But the driver stopped also and she got to take in some of the view, too. But Mr. Bryan was very enthusiastic about the view from that point where the two rivers come together and the general location of Junction. We spent, I think, five or ten minutes there, don't you?

Perry: I believe that, yes.

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: That's the point now where the new Number Ten Highway will come across it, or just a little below that.

Stevenson: A little below that, that's right. But there's a good highway there now that was built later.

Perry: Yes. Do you remember the story he told us about . . . I mean the definition he gave of a spring? I remember that in his conversation. I don't know whether I can give the definition. But he said a spring was something that produced energy and usefulness for a world that had a source higher than itself. Of course, he used the flowerly language and that's not exactly the way he said it, but that's the general idea out of it, that the source was from "On High."

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: A higher plane.

Stevenson: That's right.

Gantt: Then what did he do when he got to Junction?

Perry: You tell it, Judge.

Stevenson: (Chuckle) I don't know.

Perry: Well, we stopped in front of Loeffler Motors . . . that's Loeffler Motor Company now.

Stevenson: That's right. That's right.

Perry: And, of course, there was somebody there that wanted to take his picture. I don't remember who it was. And I know all of us stepped out of the way so they could get his picture. As I remember he had a long coat on, not a winter coat but just a duster that you used to wear in automobiles. And he insisted on all three of us getting in the picture with him. And, of course, that made me feel good because I just never thought about getting in the picture with him. And the picture that I ran in the paper then was that picture of the three of us . . .

Stevenson: With Mr. Bryan.

Perry: Yes.

Stevenson: Yes, that's right. I remember that.

Perry: He called us all three and had the picture made of us.

Gantt: Well, did he make a speech somewhere?

Perry: No, no. He didn't make a speech here anywhere. I believe they did go over to the hotel and eat lunch, now I believe they did. I'm not sure about that.

Gantt: He was just passing through, in other words.

Perry: He was going to California.

Stevenson: He was going to California.

Perry: Just on his way to California.

Stevenson: For his wife's health.

Perry: And following the old Spanish Trail from . . . you see it runs all the way from Florida to California. It doesn't run where it is now exactly, but generally in the same general area.

Gantt: Now, Governor Stevenson told us what his reaction was to the meeting. What was your impression of Mr. Bryan, the man, Mr. Perry?

Perry: Well, of course, I had had the idea that he was an idealist rather than a realist, just because I had read a lot of his articles and even then had some records of some of his speeches including the Cross of Gold speech. And, of course, until he became Secretary of State later and failed to measure up to what it took to be Secretary of State, I had thought of him as being a great man. And I think he was a great man. But he didn't have the capacity or the ability or the . . . I don't know, maybe it's the forethought of reality. It would be the same thing, I guess, in state politics as well as national politics. He just didn't have what it took to cope with the world problems.

Gantt: In other words, you doubt that he would have made a very successful President if he had been elected?

Perry: Yes, I do. I really doubt that. I think he was a great man, but I doubt that he would have made a successful President. He was more idealistic than Woodrow Wilson, even. Don't you think he was, Judge?

Stevenson: Oh, yes, I think that. He was just great on the theory of those things . . .

Perry: Yes, no doubt about that.

Stevenson: But as a man who could translate that into realities of life, something was a little deficient, I think.

Perry: He seemed to project his idealism into other people that he had to deal with and other nations that he had to deal with, and he assumed that they had the same outlook on life that he did, which they didn't have.

Stevenson: That's right. Now keep this in mind, Mr. Gantt. He visited Junction after he had been Secretary of State.

Perry: Right.

Stevenson: He was Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson. And Wilson's term had expired in January of 1921. And he was here about '20 . . . I'd say 1923, Grady, I . . .

Perry: That's what I think. Between '22 and '25, I know.

Stevenson: Yes, well, I think 1923. I believe that's right.

Gantt: Well, what sort of reaction did the town have to this? Was everybody excited about a man of his prominence coming here?

Perry: Well, I'd say most of them didn't know until he had gone, wouldn't you, Judge? (Chuckle)

Gantt: (Chuckle)

Stevenson: (Chuckle) Well, I would, too. But those that did know it were excited like you're talking about.

Perry: It was quite an occasion there for the few people that gathered there.

Stevenson: That's right.

Gantt: About how long did he stay in town?

Perry: Well, he stayed at that stop about 30 minutes, didn't he . . .

Stevenson: I'd say that.

Perry: . . . talking with people?

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: And he was still a natural politician. He shook hands with a lot of people and talked to a bunch of people. But he was concerned about his wife, and he wanted to get on to California. I understand she died pretty shortly after they got to California.

Stevenson: I don't remember when she passed away.

Gantt: Do you have a recollection of--do either of you have--of that visit?

Perry: Well, I might add this. We had two other distinguished visitors out here just about that time. I guess, Judge, you recall them. We had the man who was Attorney General under Woodrow Wilson and the man who was Postmaster General, Thomas W. Gregory and Albert Sidney Burleson. They came around here, and it fell my lot to take them fishing. I spent a couple of days with them. Gregory smoked a pipe and he was just an ordinary--very ordinary--well-met fellow, but Burleson was a little more distant, I think. Didn't you think they were?

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: The difference in the two.

Stevenson: Yes, that's right.

Perry: But I enjoyed fishing and hunting with them. And they convinced me that the statement that I'd often heard in the Army, "I'd rather talk to a Brigadier General or a Major General than to talk with a Second Lieutenant if I had the choice between the two," because in the manner of making judgments, well, he's more approachable than the man who, probably, is a little more carried away with himself than his ability warrants. And those fellows are just as common, ordinary boys as I ever associated with. And they told me lots of stories of the things that happened when they were in office. And, of course, Burleson, I guess, he was from Austin, wasn't he?

Stevenson: Yes, he lived in Austin. He had an entire block that his house was located on in Austin.

Perry: I know he had a big old house there.

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: And Gregory lived in Houston, I believe.

Stevenson: Yes. Right. Well, one of the reasons they were approachable is that they had never lost the common touch.

Perry: Well, that's right. I think that's very true of any great man.

Stevenson: Right.

Perry: When they lose the common touch, in my estimation--and my estimation is not (chuckle) worth anything--but when a man loses the common touch he isn't a great man anymore.

Stevenson: That's right. That's right. He becomes self-centered, and he's just for himself only regardless of the rest of the human race.

Perry: Right. That goes back to what you said about Joe Bailey.

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: Now I think Joe Bailey was, by most standards, was a great man.

Stevenson: He was.

Perry: But he became so egotistical, I mean so egotistic in his later life, that he destroyed most of the warm atmosphere that surrounded him when he was trying to climb the political ladder. Of course, a lot of that might have been false, but he had it anyway.

Stevenson: That's right.

Perry: And I think that's one of the things that I remember about him that makes me think that he wasn't as great a man as a lot of other people that I have known.

Stevenson: Maybe in matters of mind, Grady, but he was a great orator. There's no question about that.

Perry: Oh, no. I didn't say that. I think he had a brilliant mind.

Stevenson: Yes, he did. He had a brilliant mind . . . a brilliant mind and a great orator. And he was a magnetic personality.

Perry: Oh, yes.

Stevenson: You can say that about Joe Bailey.

Perry: I don't think he ever lost that qualification.

Stevenson: No.

Perry: He was still magnetic when he was old when he was still practicing (?).

Stevenson: That's right. That is right.



Perry: I think that's one of the characteristics maybe that Pat Neff . . . I don't think he ever lost the common touch.

Stevenson: No.

Perry: And as far as I was able to observe, he was still a good deal of a natural politician. But I mean he still liked to talk to people and work with people after he got old and after he had reached the zenith of his career. I always admired him for that.

Stevenson: I did, too. I thought Pat Neff was one of our great men who was produced in Texas.

Perry: You were telling us yesterday about some campaign in Dublin, I don't know what it was. But anyway, my daddy told me he was in Dublin when Hogg and Clark ran. And they had a joint debate in Dublin.

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: And, of course, Hogg had had the idea of the Railroad Commission in his platform and apparently the railroads shunned it.

Stevenson: Yes.

Perry: And (chuckle) my daddy said that they let Clark speak first. And, actually it was down pretty close to the railroad tracks, and after Clark finished speaking, Hogg got up to speak. And the railroad had arranged that they'd run one of their old steam engines up there about 50 yards from where the speaking platform was and let the exhaust steam--you've heard those things rumble steam out of the exhaust (chuckle). They turned that thing on

and you just couldn't hear anything . . . you couldn't hear him speak. And a bunch of those radical Hogg men, they went over there . . . they got a gun and went over there and told that engineer that if he didn't cut that steam off, they'd kill him (laughter). And he cut it off (laughter).

Stevenson: (Laughter) Well, that's understandable, (laughter) knowing the nature of the West Texas people. It is.

Perry: Then those two governors of Tennessee, and one was a Republican and one was a Democrat, but both had served as governors of Tennessee. . . .

Stevenson: And they were brothers.

Perry: Bob Taylor, and what was the other's name? I heard Bob Taylor speak in Dublin one time. He always played his fiddle before he spoke. And he played two or three tunes on his fiddle and he created a big crowd. They had a big crowd to hear him. Of course . . .

Stevenson: What was the name of the other Taylor. He was Bob Taylor's brother.

Perry: Yes, but I can't think. He established the Taylor Trotwood Magazine in Tennessee and printed it for several years.

Stevenson: Yes. Yes. They were brothers and bitter political opponents.

Perry: Yes. Both of them were governors of Tennessee and on different parties. One of them was a Republican and one of them a Democrat.

Gantt: Did they come from here?

Perry: No, but they used to speak on behalf of the national Democratic

ticket and the Republican ticket, both of them spoke for them.

Stevenson: Yes.